

THE
CONSTITUTION SAFE

WITHOUT
REFORM:

CONTAINING
SOME REMARKS ON A BOOK
ENTITLED
THE COMMONWEALTH IN DANGER,

BY
JOHN CARTWRIGHT, ESQ.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THE
Example of France a Warning to Britain.

BURY ST. EDMUND'S:
PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. RACKHAM.
SOLD ALSO BY RICHARDSON, ROYAL EXCHANGE, LONDON;
AND ALL OTHER BOOKSELLERS.

1795. / 25



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II
to
JOHN CARTWRIGHT, ESQ.

SIR,

I HAVE read, and not without amazement, the performance which you term *Remarks on my Writings*, in which you have converted a mere difference of political opinions into an unjust attack on a man who never wrote one word but politically against you, nor ever attributed to you any but political motives; while you, in the very breath that you acquit my heart, assign to me such malevolent intentions as would be consistent only with depravity of sentiment. I should very ill deserve that well-earned reputation you are pleased to allow me (till I became an enemy to reform) could I have been influenced by the base motives which you have so lavishly and falsely attributed to me. As I feel not at present, nor ever

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for one moment felt, the influence of such, I trust that I shall, in refuting your work, be able to prove, to the conviction of the candid, that you have put my writings to the torture, to extract meanings which the passages do not import, at the very time that such a conduct is the reproach with which you attempt to load me. The objects of fair political discussion were treated by me without personalities, which I always considered as the refuge of those who feel the weakness of their own arguments. An impartial public will judge whether I am capable of being seduced by public money, into a conspiracy against any man's character, and whether it is you or I that merit to be considered as a "calumniator."

I am, sir, &c.

ARTHUR YOUNG.

Chandos-street, No. 4, 30th March, 1795.

THE
CONSTITUTION SAFE.

It has been the fate of that tremendous revolution, which has ruined France and convulsed almost all Europe, to make such an impression on the minds of mankind, as no other event of history has ever occasioned. The true friends of liberty in this country viewed it at first with a mixture of amazement and applause. Doubt succeeded; but the moment of suspense was not of long duration. The mischiefs soon flowed in too fast a current to suffer hesitation to balance in the mind. Opinions changed; and well they might change, when the plans, which were supposed perfect in theory, were found in practice to lead directly to confusion. From the assembling of the states in May, 1789, to the 5th of

October, not much occurred to damp the hope that had seemed so well founded; but from the latter period the honest friends of the revolution, in proportion to the clearness of their foresight, gradually changed their sentiments, and the absolute ruin of the constitution on the 10th of August, 1792, drew a line of separation, too strong to be mistaken, between those who wished for the liberty of a limited monarchy, and others who thought national freedom might be secured after the events of that day. The former then expressed in strong terms their disapprobation of what they had before admired, and when confusion and massacre succeeded, their disapprobation grew into abhorrence.

Opinions so diametrically opposite, upon questions of such an interesting nature, could not but divide the nation into two great parties; the one admiring, the other detesting, the revolution.—Both felt with that sensibility, and expressed their feelings.

with that energy, which on such occasions are too apt to take the colours of intemperate warmth.

I did not hesitate with which party I should arrange myself. While the revolution was yet capable of becoming a blessing to mankind, I was its friend, and published the reasons on which my opinion was founded. When the events followed, which convinced me, with thousands, of the error, I abjured the doctrine, and exerted the little talents I possess, in the cause, which I esteemed that of human nature itself.

If ever the magnitude of the interests at stake, and the obvious danger arising from the dissemination of opinions hostile to our government, could call for animated exertions, that certainly was the moment.— Many who approved of the revolution of the 10th of August, I believe all, were friends of reform, and demanded changes in our constitution, of a complexion simi-

lar to some that had ruined France. From that quarter we have seen *panegyrics on anarchy, and apologies for massacre, and have been told that a revolution in England would be cheaply purchased, tho' the whole existing race were destroyed for its attainment.** Every one knows how well the opinions of those who wished to alter our constitution were seconded by the activity of various societies, most of them yet existing in this country.

But convinced as I was, that all was at stake, and that the contest was for the preservation of every thing dear to mankind,—property, liberty, and life; feeling this—and I felt it with conviction and warmth—yet I considered it merely as a public question, and never for a moment degenerated into attacks upon the private character of those I opposed. I attributed

* See the references in the *Example of France*, 4th edit. p. 214. 225.

private and base motives to none. The reader will see whether I have been treated with equal candour.

Much has been written against me, and with unusual acrimony ; but a late performance-by Mr. Cartwright has far exceeded the venom of all the rest. Near as the measures of reform have been to his heart, he seems to have written above three hundred pages chiefly for the purpose of making me the object of execration.—I have very rarely replied to such performances, and should be far from taking up the pen at present, had he not accused me of acting towards him in a manner which, were it true, would render me unworthy of confidence, and undeserving to be read.

To follow this author through his multifarious attacks for what he calls my apostacy ; his defence of Paine, and abundance of inferior topics, would be tiresome to the reader, and useless in my defence : but he

has so heavily accused me of false quotation, and of attempting to make him the professed friend to massacre (and I should hold myself so criminal, had I been capable of such malevolence) that I feel it necessary to explain the passages, which Mr. Cartwright first wraps in confusion, and then deduces that most false and illiberal conclusion.

He founds his accusation on my quoting French accounts of the anarchy and massacres of 1792, and contrasting them with his declarations in favour of the French government, in his Letter to the Duke of Newcastle, written in May, and consequently before the revolution of the 10th of August, but not published till the 25th of that month. I observed, that while the French government produced such anarchy, an Englishman may be found to declare *such a government* so beneficent as to be attributed only to the first great cause

of all. This, he says, is accusing him of writing in praise of massacre.

There are two points here to be examined; *first*, the dates of the letter, and its publication; and, *secondly*, the circumstance of praising massacre, by praising the revolution and government which produced it. If these be not clearly understood, Mr. Cartwright may convert my page, if he pleases, into an accusation of his being actually a murderer; and I have accused him of that as much as I have accused him of the other.

In regard to the dates of his letter, and its publication, I might, in the ardour of composition at a period so dreadful, have passed over the difference: knowing the letter to the Duke to be a new publication almost at the moment of those horrors, and that the author had opportunity enough of retracting his opinion, had he changed it—I might by chance have overlooked the

date; but finding the revolution praised in the warmest terms, I thought it so extraordinary, that in justice to a writer who formed opinions contrary to my own, I re-examined it with more care, and found it dated in May; and to guard my reader from an error to the disadvantage of the author, I mention in my work this circumstance of a considerable difference between the date and publication of the letter. My words are—"who praises the revolution, not as the reformation of government, but its utter destruction, and erecting in its room *that* which proved so soon after the author dated his letter, and before he published it, a MONSTER." If candid dealing could go further than this, to guard the reader from unfair conclusions against the writer, I must confess myself ignorant of what candour is; for what is this but expressly declaring, that at the time the letter was written, the government of France

was NOT a monster? Saying that it proved such after the date of the letter is equal to asserting that it was not so at the time of writing. It was sufficient to prevent his being misrepresented, to remark that those changes, which rendered the government of France *monstrous*, took place after he had written his letter. Had a friend of Mr. Cartwright been sitting at my elbow while I wrote, and seeing me lay my hand on his pamphlet, said—*Remember, if you notice that work, that it was written some months before it was published*, what more could I have done to guard against misrepresentation? But the author, determining to exert every nerve to render me odious, quotes this very passage, and adds—“seeming to insinuate that the letter had actually been written later than its date imported.”*—*Seeming to INSINUATE!* Where is the in-

* P. 32.

sinuation in words as point blank to their purpose as the English language could furnish? But they only *seem* to insinuate! A most unlucky *seeming* that can strike the eye or touch the feeling of no mortal that reads the passage, but of him only who is determined to extract from my work the *seemings* that suit his purpose.—Had my object been to stab his character and his morals without compunction, and had I felt no scruples at doing it in the most foul and dishonourable way—had I been bribed by ministry to do all this—can any one imagine that I should have been solicitous to mark such a circumstance in his favour?

The next point, that of attributing to him the odium of directly approving the massacres, is a charge so utterly groundless, that to name it would be sufficient for those who have read my work with attention; but as others, who have not, might be deceived, it is necessary to add a

few words on this head.—There is something in my nature repugnant to the idea of reasoning on so foul an aspersion; I feel in me what would revolt at such a conduct. I will not—cannot believe that the very men who have praised anarchy, and been the apologists of massacre,—I will not believe that even those men have felt what they have written. To suppose that any human being would wish to attain a political end in preference by the paths of blood, is what I cannot bring myself to conceive. When I contrasted the French descriptions of the horrors of their anarchy with Mr. Cartwright's declaration, that the government which produced them was so beneficent, that he could refer it only to the first great cause of all, it might have been clear to his or to any other apprehension, that I alluded not to the *horrors themselves*, but to the rotten system which gave rise to them—to the REVOLUTION. That Mr.

Cartwright, publishing the 25th of August, must have known of the massacres of the 10th,* time enough to have added a page to his work, can hardly be doubted ; but I did not therefore accuse him of praising those massacres—the *means employed*—but the government in spite of them. I conceived him to continue a steady friend to the revolution, although it had produced those horrors. His not adding a postscript to this purpose, to his work, but remaining silent after still greater massacres had taken place, gave me reason to think this ; and it may be worth remarking, that books published the last week in August have so

* The 10th of August the massacres began ; there were more horrid ones in September ; but from the former date it was evident that the people had the power and the practice. Whoever praised the revolution after the 10th of August, must do it, knowing it produced the massacres, whether he publishes in August, September, or October.

very small a sale, that for two months they may be considered as hardly published at all,—and consequently, an author seeing events take place that change his opinion, has obvious means of shewing that he does change it, or of softening or explaining certain sentiments or expressions that might be too highly conceived and coloured. If this is not done, the world has a right to conclude his opinion not changed: a circumstance which tends to lessen the importance of the question of dates, had I omitted to inform the reader that there was a difference in point of time between those of composition and publication;*

* In my opinion Mr. C. has laid a stress on those dates that ought by no author to be done. The sentiments which a man publishes, he avows virtually *at the time of publication*; no matter when written, unless he adds an explanation at the time when he offers a work to the public.—Till published, he has the power of explaining; and if he omits it, the reader

but guarding him, as I did, upon that fact, I might with propriety think that I was less liable to be misunderstood, as nothing could be clearer than the distinction that I might accuse him of approving the system which produced massacres, but not that of massacre as the means. What is my expression? *Such a government*. Had I meant to accuse him of preferring massacre as the mode, should I not have said *such scenes—such horrors—such effects*—or some other word equally marking the fact, as the objects which he attributed to the beneficence of the Almighty? I saw what his opinion was, and accused him of no other. His silence during the horrid period of September, &c. after having in such singular ex-

of course thinks that the same opinion is retained, or that the difference is looked upon by him as immaterial. This certainly is not to be applied to events in September or October, but the 10th of August was the date which set the stamp upon the revolution.

pressions praised the revolution, gave me reason to suppose he had not altered his sentiments. He has now justified my conclusion ; for in his present work, after infinitely greater torrents of blood have been spilt, he still declares his approbation of the revolution, and that he has never wished for the old government again.—“ It is true that to this moment I have uniformly been a friend to such a revolution as should give France a free government in exchange for her ancient despotism, and can lay my hand on my heart, and say, that I have not seen the moment when I could in my conscience wish back that ancient despotism.”*

This certainly is not a panegyric on massacre, but it is declaring in favour of the revolution, in spite of all the horrors that have attended it. It is repeating the sentiment in 1795 which he makes a question of

* Introd. p. 35.

dates in 1792,* and shews that three years of bloody confusion have wrought in this respect no change in his opinion.

And be such an opinion removed from mine far as the poles asunder! I do not think the authority weak which estimates the revolutionary losses of France at one-sixth of her population;—infinitely the greater part murdered in cold blood, or dead of famine or the miseries which famine inflicts. And this to attain what? Not a free government; for that we have Mr. Cartwright's own authority, who now says,—“At present France has no constitution, but a temporary and revolutionary government,”† which, it will be said, may in the end produce one. Admirable logic! He thinks the revolution so beneficent, as

* The *struggles* during the winter of 1792 he now calls “a strong effervescence of that genuine liberty which universal suffrage implies.” P. 109.

† *Introd.* p. 34.

never to wish back the ancient despotism, because the new system *may* produce a free government. But could not the ancient despotism also produce a free government? IT DID PRODUCE IT. From the meeting of the states to the 10th of August, 1792, it produced a system capable of being matured into permanent liberty, and had not the demon of reform possessed the nation, would have consolidated it.—He has not for one moment wished back a system which experiment proved to be tending every hour to freedom; and he rejoices in a revolution, which now, after three years of horrors, he himself pronounces to have produced *no constitution at all*. Was I not then, as a sincere friend to the liberty of mankind in general, and to that of France in particular, justified in saying that the restoration of the old government would be a remedy for the evils of that kingdom, as despotism may and did lead to freedom? But anarchy

has in almost every case, which history has given us, conducted its votaries to despotism: yet this opinion excites the indignation of Mr. Cartwright.

It was on this principle, and this alone, that I asserted that the event of Robespierre's rendering himself the monarch of France was preferable to the anarchy which gave that monster his authority, or to the all-conquering power of a Spartan republic: an opinion, upon which Mr. C. breaks into such exclamations as these,—“ Is it possible that a Christian can thus forget his humanity? Can he take consolation in the hope of seeing a fiend raised by murders innumerable to the throne of the Bourbons? Oh apostacy !”* Where does he find the consolation and hope of murders? The consolation of the chance of such an event putting an end to murders, he makes *the*

* P. 138.

hope of murders innumerable!!!—Candid this, without doubt.

But to dwell no further on the propriety of his opinions or of mine—suffice it to remain proved as clearly as the nature of such a case admits, that I never in any one passage attributed to this author an approbation of those massacres which have deluged France with blood; and this gentleman, in one passage, as much as confesses it. At page 35, he is strenuous to assert (as if I had accused him of it) that he “has not *equally* approved of *all the means* that have been employed by the successive actors since the beginning;” and adds in a note—“The true and evident meaning of Mr. Young’s words.”—Had the meaning been evident, where was the necessity of that note? Does he not confess, by adding it, that the words were dubious? If dubious, why not quote the expressions? In those he has quoted, not an iota is to be

found, nor even an implication that he approved equally of all the means. He felt that he was accusing for the sake of abusing, and therefore was forced to lend the *intent* and *meaning* of words, too precise and defined to be mistaken by any but such as would wilfully mistake them. Let the reader himself judge of the passage as quoted by the author:—"Nor let us forget that these men have been equal friends to the French revolution from the beginning, and they are steadily so at this moment; under the constituent assembly they approved and published panegyrics on the annihilation of orders; under the next assembly they rejoiced at the demolition of royalty; and under the convention, all the horrors we have seen are insufficient to remove their approbation." What right this author had to suppose that I alluded to him only in this passage, I know not; I used the plural, because I had previously refuted

others as well as himself, and pointed at them here in the mass; but suppose I had attributed this singly to him, is there one syllable in it to justify him for making me say that he *equally approved all the means?*—by what art of verbal torture can he convert *equal friends to the French revolution into equal approbation of the means?*—two ideas as distinct as language can mark. Nor is there one word in my *Example* which attributed, directly or by implication, to him any approbation of those means. I saw from his writings that he approved of the revolution—the system—government—or by whatever other name it was characterised;—the change—effected in France in spite of what it had produced—but I saw no approbation of massacre and bloodshed, and should have disdained to attribute it to him. In this I followed the dictates of candour. Let the reader judge what his candour has been to me, and to which of us belong the

calumny, falsehood, baseness, and a long catalogue of similar qualities with which he has decorated his pages.

On conclusions thus drawn, and on words thus tortured into meanings far different from my own, he thus paints my design against him:—"My reputation is to be stabbed; my moral character destroyed, and I am to be exhibited as a man delighting in a government of anarchy, proscription, and blood:"* and in another passage—"for the purpose of crimination, and of holding me up as a fit object for the severities of an attorney-general."† †

* P. 25.

† P. 8.

‡ Speaking of the *deep* and *atrocious* designs of ministry against public liberty, he goes on "as a preparative for legal attack, it is necessary to such ministers that in the public mind, including the minds of the future juries, the cause of these men (reformers) should if possible be brought into distaste or contempt; their intentions misrepresented; their charac-

Can the reader believe, after this, that from the first page to the last of my work, there is not one syllable personally applied

ters destroyed; and their *names* made objects of detestation and abhorrence.—*Example of France*, p. 191."

|| It would be natural for a reader to suppose, that at the place here referred to, some names were mentioned at least, and that more was to be seen than an attempt to bring the cause of reform into distaste; now it happens, that neither in that nor in the preceding page is any name whatever mentioned; and the last subject treated was an observation of Paine's on Mr. Burke: but the words alluded to are these: "by rejecting, reprobating, and holding up to abhorrence every idea of altering, reforming, or tampering, at so dangerous a crisis, with the constitution to which we owe our prosperity." p. 191. It suited the purpose of the writer, who is convinced of my *conspiracy* against liberty, to make me hold up *names* to *juries* for *legal attack*. My expression, *idea of reform*, would not answer that design; for juries do not find bills against ideas. Instead of saying only that I held up

|| Introd. p. 8.

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to Mr. C. ; one allusion to his character, good or bad ; or an iota that attributes any private or unworthy motive to him ? Will it be believed that I every where attempt to refute his political opinions only, and that I do it on the open public grounds of great constitutional questions ? In return for such a conduct, how has he treated me ?—
 “ Cruel and immoral purposes ! ” page 55.—“ vague accusations in the spirit of assassination ; ” 57.—“ In the pay and patronage of ministers, for designs hostile to liberty ; ” 120.—“ The sinister plan of Pitt, Dundas, Jenyns, and Young ; ” 120.—“ an instrument in the hands of a wicked faction for the infernal purpose of extirpating liberty ; ” 148.—“ Entrusted by the borough-mongers with a leading part in the conspi-

their cause, &c. he adds *names*, as if I meant only to mark them as a prey to those juries. Mr. Cartwright may think this fair quotation and candid dealing ;—I leave it to the reader.

racy against liberty;" 153.—"a conspiracy so foul in favour of a gang so contemptible."

With strong insinuations, in other passages, that I wrote the *Example*, influenced by public money.

I consider all this rage—these flowers of invective, and all his other personalities, as the greatest compliment Mr. Cartwright's pen could pay to my work. Had he attempted coolly to refute it, he might not equally have proved its importance. He could not refute the book, and therefore he reviles the author.

He accuses me of holding him up to the severities of the attorney-general. To what does he hold me up through the whole course of a five shilling volume? In contentious, dangerous times, what is it that he does not call down on my head, by attempting to persuade the people that I am the bitterest enemy of their liberty? Against whom does he point their vengeance?—"When

Mr. Y. shall see England covered with French armies, and the multitude balancing in their minds whether to fight for the borough-monger usurpation, he may, when too late, repent of having acted the part of a public deceiver."* Doubtless, if the borough-mongers are to fall before the public detestation, their *instrument in conspiracy* would not have much mercy shewn him, after thus being held up as a proper object of destruction. "Every possible effort ought to be exerted to weaken the faction of borough-mongers, by exposing them in repeated petitions to parliament, in resolutions of patriotic societies, in writings, and in conversation, to the contempt and detestation of mankind."†—"Are borough-mongers prepared to brave the public odium? Are they fortified against the detestation and contempt of all mankind?

* P. 161.

† P. 142

Pointed at in our streets by the finger of scorn? The borough-monger's trade is national pillage and depredation, and his means fraud, menace, or murder, as his occasions require."*

* P. 47.—And to whom are these men held up to such singular execration? without doubt, to those peculiarly with whom Mr. Cartwright's eloquence may be supposed to have full effect; those with whom he has associated. In one place, he speaks of his coadjutors as "a handful of private men of good character;" but not all; for he is not above *taking the assistance* of others, whose characters may not rise to the unsullied dignity of being contrasted, like John Hardy, as the fisherman of antiquity to such pharisees as Mr. Burke or Mr. Wyndham, at least if we are to judge by his own account—"I have associated with the very worst men to be found in the night cellars of London, and felons from Newgate. If government *oblige* gentlemen to take the assistance of such men in defending their country, it need not be offended that gentlemen should join in saving that country, by joining in moral acts with men with whom they are not personally acquainted." p. 10. In the hour of confusion, the night

But who are the men whose means are murder, and whose reward is to be scorn? The term *Borough-mongers* is so vague, that it may mark the men who possess, the men who buy, the men who sell, the men who elect, and the men who are elected; nay, from a passage in the latter part of his work, it seems to include those who *recommend* to seats. In his general way of using the term, it seems to attach to every body concerned in boroughs not open: but in the passages quoted from the petition to the House of Commons, it seems to mean those who possess and those who recommend. There is something dubious in it;

cellars and Newgate would, without question, afford very enlightened and temperate juries to sit in judgment on the trial of borough-mongers, after Mr. Cartwright had pourtrayed them in such amiable colours. *Join in moral acts!* I shall not question the purity of such morals. The state trials explained enough *one sort* of political morality.

and the expression itself, *mongers*, is one of the most vague in the language. In the vulgar acceptation, it means those who deal in, who sell commodities; in a ludicrous one, it alludes to such as hold commerce with them: but as Mr. C. does not seem to have studied the danger of the commonwealth under the influence of any gentle conceptions, I dare say he had no gayer idea than the trade of a fishmonger flaying a live eel. When he was consigning a whole description of men to public scorn and contempt, why not use precise and defined terms? Will the reader believe that this can be the man who thus remarks on me? "It is cruel and immoral not to give his readers the precise sense in which certain words and phrases are to be understood, particularly Jacobin. An honourable mind will not think such unfair weapons ought to be used in the warfare of controversy."*

* P. 55

“What can he mean by certain words used for the cruel and immoral purpose of so spreading public delusion and prejudice, and so calumniating certain descriptions of men, that they may thereby be rendered objects of persecution, that their fortunes and their lives may be successfully attacked, and that the whole circle of their families and children may be involved in distress !” *—“Vague accusations striking at men’s fortunes, honour, peace, and existence.” † It must be clear to the reader, how singularly moral and amiable it is to doom a whole description of men to scorn and contempt, under the heaviest of accusations, using murder as a mean,—whose only real fault, if we are to understand some passages in the work in the obvious import, is possessing property which gives them the power of naming to certain boroughs, of electing, or being elected for

* P. 55.

† P. 57.

them; power derived from property inherited from their ancestors, or fairly purchased; or, in other cases, from respectability of character, hospitality of living, or the practice of virtues which make them beloved by their neighbours, and which give them weight to recommend with success; and for being in such situations they are held up to detestation and contempt, and asked whether they are prepared to *brave* the public odium? as if that odium, *even to vengeance*, were meant to be called on them and their instruments. Heaven forbid that we should see this country the scene of public confusion! But were it to become such, would not Mr. Cartwright think, that by thus holding up a set of men to the detestation and fury of such times, he had not acted a part of that "christian charity"—"mercy"—or "morals"—for the want of which towards jacobins, he so severely reproaches me?

In regard to his various insinuations, and in some passages direct accusations, of my having been influenced to write by public money, it is a calumny that every man connected with government, with whom I have had any correspondence, knows to be utterly unfounded. Mr. C. himself informs his reader that the first publication of the essay, which afterwards became the *Example of France*, was in autumn 1792. Several editions of the work were printed before my appointment at the Board of Agriculture.—Living retired on my farm, without the most distant connexion or correspondence with administration—without instigation—or the smallest idea of reward,—my feelings of public danger alone produced the work. I have never been urged to take pen in hand by any of their friends, never received one shilling of public money, nor any other advantage direct or indirect from government, except the

salary openly and publicly, as secretary to the Board of Agriculture. Mr. C. must have strange ideas of the bribes with which ministers influence men to become parties in conspiracies, to think that such a salary, by annual election, with an expensive attendance (by the statutes of the Board) from the first of November to the last of July, to a man occupying a considerable farm, and who had just purchased a much more considerable one with a view to improve it, could be considered as a bribe to turn conspirator—or as a reward for having been one!!!—NO—such were not the ideas that made me secretary to the Board. My agricultural pursuits for near thirty years, the works which I had published having national improvement for their aim, and the minute surveys I had taken of three kingdoms—pointed me out as a person (in their estimation) proper for the office,—and I hold it free from such unworthy

motives, either in government or myself, as these *candid, generous* enemies have so lavishly attributed to the appointment.

If Mr. Cartwright thinks his great cause of reform is still built on a solid foundation—why these personalities? Are they necessary to prove universal suffrage and annual parliaments wise measures? Is reasoning so baffled that you must deviate from the question to the man? Who that has confidence in his argument will thus shift his ground? shift it from that which is interesting to a nation, to private views that can touch but the malignity of a few! In refuting Mr. Cartwright's opinions, had I gone from their public bearings to his private motives, and accused him of being bribed by reforming societies, or by a French convention, might it not have been asked justly—*Are his arguments so strong that you cannot refute them? If you can destroy his reasoning, your object is attained;*

but to render that a personal which ought to be a public question only, do you not wander from the broad basis of general good into the narrow paths of private pique? And as you know nothing personally of this man, what pique can you have against him, but that of feeling more force in his arguments than you know how to answer? Such an observation must either have changed my purpose, or left me in the contemptible situation of confessing the utter futility of my own performance.

There is one remark of Mr. C.'s, which could not have been reasonably expected—
 “In his whole book there is scarcely a page which exhibits the politeness of a gentleman.” * This charge, at the first sight, seems unfavourable to that amenity of language which constitutes any thing like elegance of style; but, upon com-

* P. 66.

paring his ideas of elegance, such a conclusion might probably not be well founded. In one passage,* he speaks of the "ribald buffoonery of Mr. Soame Jenyns," but in another † he calls him "the elegant and courtly Jenyns." Now if *ribald buffoonery*, in this writer's estimation, forms *courtly elegance*, I may suppose, without drawing too much on vanity, that pages devoid of the politeness of a gentleman may be written with polished ease; and thus what at first sight might seem to condemn the book, was really a compliment to it: and this appears the more probable, from some passages in this gentleman's work, which surely might be thought, by readers of a certain class, rather uncourtly; but if examined by that measure which makes ribaldry, elegance will appear to be wrought to an uncommon polish—"The oligarchy

* P. 61.

† P. 65.

of borough-mongers, this beast with the great belly"*—"The gorged and swollen blood-suckers—order a muster of the hundred and fifty-four.† Call them into your presence: set the reptiles before your eyes: ask them if the maggots of corruption can conquer armies, or the worms of a dunghill defend a nation?"‡ Swift says, that a nice man is a man of nasty ideas; if so, Mr. C. in whose imagination gorged bellies, reptiles, maggots, and dunghills, dance through all the *mazes of metaphorical confusion*, may be esteemed a pattern of niceness, and fit for the employment he gives himself of "clearing the mansion of nymphs from defilement." That mind

* P. 99.

† These hundred and fifty-four reptiles, &c. include many of the first, wealthiest, and most respectable persons for rank, character, and abilities, which the kingdom has to boast.

‡ P. 136.

which thinks ribald buffoonery consistent with courtly elegance, must conceive that such language has the refined lustre, the true chastity of finished politeness.*

* In the second page of his introduction, he speaks of my *loathsome and disgusting materials, in which are to be numbered guts and garbage, the night soil of the inquisition, the rank ordure of despotism, carcasses of slaughtered citizens,—and drenched in human gore.*—To four of these expressions he adds marks of reference, with the pages at the bottom of his. A reader, not aware of the arts of misrepresentation which a writer can descend to, who complains so heavily of false quotation, could hardly fail of supposing that these were my expressions; and he might conclude that Mr. C. very properly reprobated the *unpoliteness* of my style. But it so happens that the guts and garbage were not my language, but Gen. Burgoyne's, and quoted as his: that the elegant metaphors, *night soil*, and *rank ordure*, are Mr. Cartwright's own, for I have no such words in my book: *carcasses* is in a quotation from himself: where he gets his *gore*, I know not; for though it has a mark of reference, there is no page.

Mr. Cartwright is an author who has, in various works, strongly contended that a

One of the heaviest of Mr. Cartwright's charges against me, is that of false quotation, and misrepresenting what he writes; I have shewn, in several instances, how grossly he has been guilty of this himself: what will a candid reader say to the following?—In my *Idea of the present State of France*, after observing on the propriety of silencing our Jacobin societies, I add this passage—"Let these men who are copying, with such religious veneration, the forms, the expressions, the principles, that have desolated France, and seen her lose by the field, the dungeon, and the scaffold, thirteen hundred thousand men,—tell us what would be the fate of societies established amidst the liberty of that kingdom, to reform abuses or alter the constitution!—They would count in the six hundred and fifty thousand wretches in prisons, filled faster than they are emptied, though three hundred heads per diem fall by the guillotine!—efforts of that purity of freedom so much extolled!—of that flood of light and truth which sweeps from the earth despotism in all its forms.*" Mr. C. would not let this passage

* Society for Constitutional Information.

much more enlarged representation of the people was a right derived from the practice

go unnoticed; and thus he speaks of it—"The first proposed imitation of conventional energy, is either to silence all societies professing to 'meet to reform abuses,' or to let them count amongst 'the wretches in prisons.'" p. 9.

Here is exact quotation and fair dealing with a witness!!! I assert that the members of such societies, so meeting and resolving against the established government in France, would soon find themselves in prison—which Mr. C. turns into my *proposing*, as an imitation of conventional energy, to throw the members of English societies into prison; a very convenient mode of quoting an adversary, in order to render him 'detestable.' Is there no way of legally suppressing such societies, but to make them *count among wretches in prisons*? They would be treated so in France—THEREFORE I propose them to be so treated in England!—because French despotism would act in that manner, THEREFORE I propose the same violence to the English government! Such are the fair and candid representations given, of my writings, by one who accuses me of "misquoting and misapplying his words for the purpose of making them ex-

of distant ages, lost by modern corruptions; an error, to refute which I inserted many passages in my *Exemple of France*. It might have been imagined that this gentleman, in the course of a bulky volume, might have attempted to shew that his former arguments were sound and unrefuted: he now says, "Weak must be Mr. Y.'s arguments against reform, if he feels himself driven to the wretched shift of going beyond the conquest."* The wretched shift of going where Mr. C. led me! and he finishes the paragraph by saying, "But be it just as Mr. Y. pleases;" and thus he press sentiments foreign to his heart, and contrary to his own application of them," and of "palming upon another person, for the sake of rendering him odious, sentiments only uttered by himself—when a man can condescend to do this, to expect either principle or dispassionate argument in his performance were not very rational."—Very true indeed, Mr. C. the conclusion is apposite!

* P. 45.

dismisses the great historic fact which he himself had written so much to establish. —The reader who knows what a favourite subject this has been with Mr. C. will draw his own conclusions. I quote it as one material proof of the views with which the *Commonwealth in Danger* has been composed, which seems to have had no better origin than the purpose of lavishing a volume of abuse on me. How inconsistent! to represent a man as perfectly detestable and contemptible, and then labour through three hundred pages against one, who, if he was *felt* to be the character *described*, must be utterly unworthy of as many lines. But the fact is, my book proved a stumbling-block in the path of our reformers; they knew that by fair argument they could not answer it,—the experiment was more than once made, and failed.—Mr. C. has not attempted it; he has taken another road, and transferred the attack from the

book to the author,—of all other methods the most effective to shew the idea of importance which even reformers have of that work.

The great question of reform affects every bosom, excites the feelings of every heart that beats for national happiness.—

What, on comparison of such interests, are the personal contentions of two individuals? How enlarged the sphere of one! How pitifully contracted the little field of the other! He therefore, in argument that first quits the expansive range of public views for the little circle of private ones, proves that the feelings of vanity are nearer his heart than the dictates of patriotism, and that the liberty of millions is but the puckered gauze that veils, not hides, the dearer interests of self.

There is no circumstance in my writings that moves so much indignation in Mr. Cartwright's and the numerous other pens

that have been employed to abuse me, than that entire change which took place in my mind on the revolution of the 10th of August, 1792,—my “miraculous conversion.”* It furnishes great matter of tri-

* Upon my political inconsistency, I shall add here a note by my valuable and learned friend the Rev. Dr. Valpy, of Reading, taken from the appendix, p. 137, to his *Progress of Morality, Religion, and Laws*, 8vo. 1793, Richardson. But I might justly be accused of vanity, in transcribing a passage so favourable to myself, if I had not his request to do it;—were the author strongly attached to any party, I would not do it; but all who know him know his moderation, how sincerely he loves his country, and his perfect freedom from all party connections.

“See Arthur Young’s *Example of France a Warning to Britain*, in which the spirited author has painted, in the most glowing colours, the calamitous effects of making population, and not property, the ground of representation. It has been asserted, with some confidence, by the violence of party, that Mr. Young has given, in that work, a complete recantation of his former opinions: with that excellent writer in the cause

umph to these writers to set in contrast passages of my works written before and after that epoch, and then to hold me up as an inconsistent monster of singular apostacy. It might have been thought in candour, were candour to be found in Jacobin bosoms, that there was nothing very singular in a change of opinion which at the

of liberality and patriotism, the author of these sheets is happy to boast a long intimacy; during the course of his private conversation and correspondence, or of his various publications, Mr. Young has never deviated from his principles; his change of opinion, respecting the French, has been the consequence of their change of system; he glowed with a Maury and a Mounier in the cause of liberty, but like them he shrunk with horror at the scenes of desolation which marked the abuse of it. The disinterested exertions of Mr. Young, in promoting the agricultural and political interests of this country, have been admired and unrewarded by a long series of administration; he was a man of no party, he was therefore neglected by all parties."—&c.

same moment, and from the same cause, pervaded the whole kingdom; no corner of it, from the greatest cities to the most inconsiderable villages, was exempt from persons who felt and changed as I did.— Many of the best and greatest men in the nation, whose sentiments in both houses of parliament had been expressed as decisively as mine had been, then suddenly cut short upon their path, and from having been strong friends to the revolution, and adverse to the ministry, became determined enemies to the first, and gave their support to the latter. If I was an apostate, it was in company that a man might be proud of being any thing. To brand me with inconsistency seems to my mind unreasonable in the extreme, or the very dictates of republicanism. Because I thought liberty, before the 10th of August, a blessing to France, *therefore* I was to think French liberty, after that period, a blessing

also! Because I thought reform in the constitution of England wholesome, before the French revolution, *therefore* I am to think it safe and expedient now! Because I conceived the revolution through its first period had not poisoned the minds of the people, and had not given them the theory and practice of equality and anarchy, under the mask of reforming abuses, and consequently offered no example to deter their neighbours from reformation, *therefore* I was still to entertain the same conceptions after the mask was thrown off, and all the horrors of anarchy were rooting in France, and attempts were made, with infinite assiduity by reform, to plant them in England! And *because* my opinion was different, I am held up as a fit object for the execration of the people!—Be it so. I meet these impotent efforts of republican

malignity with the tranquility of a heart that feels not the reproach.

Yes: *republican* malignity; for what but that principle can call for personal representation and annual parliaments, as Mr. Cartwright now demands them, without feeling that our constitution would be endangered, and whatever we possess at present, put at least to the hazard of a revolution? He calls for them in a singular manner indeed! "It is time," says he, "to seek *republican* energy in the full recovery of the constitution;"* for "nought but a resurrection can renew the political life of the nation,"† And how is this republican resurrection to be brought about? By a million of legislators with bayonets in their hands. "Giving to a

* P. 43.

† P. 82.—If it does not awaken at some words of the Attorney-general.

million of armed men a voice in the direction of affairs;" and observes, that "arming the people and reforming parliament are inseparable."*

He draws the most hideous picture of the probable events of the war: London burnt, the kingdom conquered, and her people hewers of wood and drawers of water. The only prevention, his legislative million. I proposed a militia of property of 500,000 men. A limitation to property is not at all to his mind: with his views, he is certainly right; for such men might be content with the constitution as it is; they might be satisfied with that dispensation of liberty which this author calls *the scanty fragments and loathsome offals, the crumbs of borough-mongers' tables*. They might be inclined to repel a foreign enemy without first forming a new

* P. 17.

constitution. But with Mr. Cartwright's *million*, reform, he tells us, is inseparable. In various passages, too numerous to quote, he represents the country at present as not worth fighting for; and if our liberty is nothing but loathsome offals, he is unquestionably right.—What then can he mean but that his million of bayonets should make a government that is worth fighting for, and then fight for it.—“An armed nation would smile at Mr. Young's conceit of a house of commons;” p. 87. Without doubt they would make one of their own; and the records of the state trials tell us very clearly what that would be, if such an armed multitude should take the advice of reformers.

Mr. Cartwright has a budget of advice for the occasion. He tells us that the idea of a king and lords having equal power with the house of commons is a pernicious

cious error;* and he feels no compunction at giving this advice to his million, though he himself observes, that by the balance of public opinion, "republicanism goes down, and monarchy and aristocracy are kicking the beam."† Has he no apprehensions that, with such opinions, there would not be some danger that the king and the house of lords would be found useless incumbrances?—None. They would *find safety under the wings of a real commonwealth.*‡

* "Unreflecting persons may imagine that the king and the lords, as independent branches of the legislature, ought to have *equal* power with the house of commons; but, in the present state of things, this were naturally impossible; and to think them entitled to such equality were a pernicious error." p. 118.

† P. 112.

‡ "Muddy headed men may talk of a limited monarchy; an absolute contradiction in terms." p. 98. "There might be sense in calling it a mixed democracy; distinction, to be seriously attended to, which

In the same breath that he tells us that "words govern public opinion,"* he proposes an entire change in the nominal forms of the constitution and the law, which at present he calls monstrous fictions. "Would it not run full as well—" "Be it therefore enacted, by the people of this common-wealth in parliament assembled, with the counsel and assent of the lords of parliament and his majesty, and by the sovereign authority of the same."† ‡ If words govern public opinion,

may ultimately save both aristocracy and regality from being swept away by that strong and increasing current of opinion which already begins to threaten them with utter extinction throughout Europe, except where they may find safety *under the wings of a real common-wealth.*" p. 99. We have seen, in France, the safety given to monarchy by a common-wealth!

* P. 126.

† P. 129.

‡ At p. 126, he calls Lord Chief Justice Eyre using the epithet—*British monarchy a stab to the English constitution.*

might it not happen that the good people of this common-wealth, receiving a full idea of their own importance, in the turn of such language, and in the scurvy position of majesty in the rear, might have a fellow-feeling with their brethren in France, and consider a king only as an *ogre that devours*. They would rather choose to be the ogre themselves. They are, besides, instructed by Mr. Cartwright, that *to be a subject is a debasement*.* And lest in such a situation the legislative million should feel too much respect for property, Mr. C. very kindly wishes to give a sentimental turn to their feelings, which could not fail greatly to secure it. "Strip kings of their outside shew, and men of external advantages, and

* "A period when the triumphs and the energies of republicanism on both sides the Atlantic proclaim it to be the species of government for every one who prefers the dignity of being a citizen to the debasement of being a subject." p. 133.

then tell me whether he who weaves, or he who wears, the broad cloth, is the most useful member of political society ; or whether those whose productive labour actually *create* the wealth of the state, and all the means of revenue, or those whose only merit, like that of the hog in the stie, is to *consume*, and to live on the labour of others, most deserve the title of citizens."

" It is sentiment, and not reasoning, on which you must depend. The multitude must be made to feel and to sympathise. Nature knows no such distinctions as rich and poor." This is something like considering the rich as *bogs in a stie*, fattened to be devoured.

Mr. C. without doubt considered this as a very proper hint to the million of legislators who are to reform the constitution before they have any thing worth fighting for. If nature knows no such distinctions as rich and poor, why should

the reformed constitution of England admit any such distinction? Our author sees no evils springing out of such a system, moving under the impulse of such advice; or, if evils should be apprehended, he takes care to tell us that they ought to be utterly disregarded. "But supposing for a moment that the hereditary orders should entertain fears that the people, once made free, and acting through an independent house of commons, might think some of their privileges might be dispensed with; what then? Laying such fears in one scale, and the rights and liberties of millions in the other, which ought to preponderate?"* No one can doubt for a moment which scale would *kick the beam*. So little apprehension has he of the consequences that might arise from a train of reformatations so nearly resembling, in form and substance, those which have filled France with anarchy and

* P. 105.

massacre, that he thinks all the happiness and prosperity we have enjoyed for a century, under the British constitution, when urged as a balance to his republican schemes, no more than the prejudices of antiquaries and old women. "Arm the people; let them be fully represented in annual parliaments; exchange the word *kingdom* for that of *common-wealth*; and accommodate to that wise and salutary exchange the whole language and law of the state; by these means royalty and nobility may remain in safety without shaking any more respectable prejudice than that of a herald, an antiquary, or an old woman."

126.

Accommodate the WHOLE LAW of the state to the change of the word *kingdom* for *common-wealth*; and this accommodation to be wrought by a million of bayonets! Mr. Cartwright is apprehensive that such legislators would demand their rights

with too much *sangfroid* and tranquility, and therefore wisely intimates that reasoning for liberty should be in the voice of thunder. "If after this, O Englishmen, ye raise not your voice till it thunder into silence every voice opposing, ye may talk about liberty, but ye know it not,"—&c.*

To quote such opinions, and to dwell on such insanity of reformation, with a view to refutation, would be idle indeed. The poison of such ideas carries its own antidote: I do not introduce them here to shew what republicans aim at; we know it well; but to shew the sentiments of reforming *loyalists*—of men who profess that it would be immoral to abolish royalty! † and who give roasted sheep and ale and music, on the recovery of kings!

I will not trouble the reader further with my own sentiments, than merely to declare that my opinion continues exactly the same

* P. 156.

† Introd. p. 35.

as it has constantly been from August 10, 1792. I am as sensible, I believe, as others are, of the abuses which time has brought into our government, as well as every other that is the work of man; I trust that they will be gradually corrected.—Before the revolution of France degenerated into anarchy, a gradual correction did not seem to be necessary. There was nothing then dangerous in innovations or the spirit of reform.—Since that period such numbers of men have associated, or continue to associate, with views so dangerous in my estimation, and we have been deluged with publications, so thoroughly in the revolutionary spirit—that I feel all reform on such principles—all tampering with, or altering our constitution, to be in such perilous times the very height of insanity. As to the French revolution, I detest and abhor it, as a change that has been utterly destructive of human happiness, and in

proving so, more destructive of liberty than of any other blessing on which happiness depends. France has hitherto gained nothing, but she has lost much; and I firmly believe, that if the real sentiments of that people were individually known, infinitely the majority would be found to pray to heaven to give them their old government with all its abuses, rather than any thing they have known (great as have been their military triumphs) since August, 1792.—The end of government is the happiness of the people. I will not look to any of the higher classes, but compare the state of the poor in England with that of the poor in France, since that period; the former possessing none of *what Mr. C. calls political liberty*; the latter, in the full exercise of it, with all the abuses of the old government done away. Is there a single feature in the comparison that should make the lower classes in

England balance for a moment, whether they should fight for what they possess, and to keep for ever from their doors French liberty and equality?

That the evils of war are dreadful, and that peace is a blessing most devoutly to be wished, who can question? We do not want Mr. C.'s sagacity to convince us of this truth. And to whom would peace be more personally interesting than to administration? The war to them has changed a bed of roses into a precipice of thorns and briars. But let us have a safe and lasting peace: not an insidious truce. The arbitrary countries of Europe are in this respect in a situation the reverse of our own. They do not, on a peace, disband their forces; they do not lay up a navy that requires three years effectually to man and fit for sea; they are always ready. The convention know well our state; the immense expences and the time

that are necessary to bring our force into full play. Were their intentions the most hostile, they would readily disarm us by such a truce. But would the gentlemen, who now call the loudest to finish the war by their execrations of it,—would they wish a peace in circumstances, or with men, that must leave its duration a matter of dreadful hazard? Do they wish to leave Flanders a real, and Holland a virtual province of France? Add to this, the confidence in their resources, which will make them think themselves superior to the rest of the world, and therefore imperious and restless. What security for the permanence of peace, but the restoration of conquests?—Without such proofs of sincerity, would you free the enemy from the pressure of their difficulties, when those difficulties are greatest, and enable them so to consolidate the union of their conquests, as to make all hope of future resistance at least

questionable? Would you act this imprudent part, while assignats are at 95 per cent. discount,* and their monthly equal

* There is no observation more common than to hear the depreciation of American paper dollars quoted as a proof that French assignats may be thus sunk, and yet the war terminated gloriously by the Convention; but the essential difference of the two cases does not seem to be well considered:

1. The inhabitants of towns in America bear but a very inconsiderable proportion to the mass of the people; infinitely the greater number live on their farms and plantations, fed and clothed by the labour of their own hands: the fall in paper dollars could not affect them as to the prime necessities of life.—In France it is the reverse; the towns contain a large proportion of the whole community, fed and supported thro' the medium of the current paper. Destroy the currency, and you stop the first and greatest of all connexions, that between towns and the country. And America, having no capital of over-grown importance and population, felt none of the enormous expences in paper, for supplying and keeping it quiet.

2. The narrow, oblong form of America was exceedingly favourable for supplying her armies in kind,

to our annual expences? He must be a bad man, and a worse politician, who prays not for a secure peace; but there is neither prudence nor wisdom in supposing, or attempting to persuade the people, that there are not infinite difficulties in the way of attaining it. Insecure as the convention itself must be esteemed, still our government have not neglected steps that shew how without the intervention of paper dollars; in France it is the reverse: the square, compact form of that kingdom removes their armies to a distant frontier, made still more remote by conquests; armies, so situated, must be supplied by purchases, and consequently by assignats.

3. America was assisted by French, Dutch, and Flemish loans—France has no such supplies.

The comparison might be branched into other particulars, touching especially the forced levies, the requisitions, pre-emption, the maximum, &c. so far as they have affected the paper currency; but whoever well considers the two first points only, will see that the fall or destruction of assignats, in France, is quite of another importance than a similar depreciation of paper dollars in America.

well they are disposed to peace. Have the convention declared to Europe, that they are ready to abandon their conquests, in order to restore peace to the world? Have they not rather manifested an ambition dangerous to the independency of their neighbours? *

So much for Mr. Cartwright, and a performance † for which I ought perhaps much to thank him; since, by no other method in the power of ill-directed ingenuity, could he possibly have contrived so to assist the favourable opinion that has been manifested of my *Example of France*. He sat down, meditating refutation; he examined every page—the pursuit did not please him—he found the great political

* The late peace with Spain, by the acquisition of Saint Domingo, is a strong proof of this.

† In another passage of his work, he attributes to me a criticism on him, in the *British Critic*, which I never saw, and did not even know that such an one existed.

principles, there developed, invulnerable ;— he lost his temper,—but still resolving to refute something, he changed the object— varied his accusation, and gradually made himself the important hero of three hundred pages—the dreaded reformer, to destroy whose character a horrid and bloody conspiracy is formed by Pitt, Dundas, Wyndham, Burke, Jenkinson, Canning, and their bribed and detestable instrument, Arthur Young.* In the blaze of such a pregnant subject, no wonder that personal representation and annual parliaments, Saxon liberty, and the purity of representation in former periods, are either forgot-

* But did you really, as he says, call *reformers* (and he is professedly one) “cut-throats and banditti?”

Note of a friend.

Answer.—Here is the passage, word for word—“JOIN IN ASSOCIATIONS *for our defence against BANDITTI CUT-THROATS, and JACOBINS; join against an enemy more subtle, and therefore more dangerous,—the friends of reform.*” Here is a direct distinction between the mere reformer and the banditti.

ten, lightly touched on, or consigned to a quotation from a former work. To defend himself from misrepresentations never made, and to convert that defence into a furious attack on me, became the main subject of a work, begun for better and far different views. How he has established that attack, the reader is the judge. If he has not proved his points, and I trust he has not, I ought not to regret the attempt; wanting no instigation to vengeance, or ability to refute what was capable of refutation; if he has failed in his designs, he sanctions the innocence of the man he has accused.

Feeling that I was guarded by that best of shields, I have had no disposition to be angry, nor to copy the unhandsome language he has used to me. I have retorted none of his abuse: had he felt a confidence in the truth of his opinions, or in the vigour that impressed them, he would himself have disdained such weapons,—his ar-

dour would have been exerted in the support of his own principles, rather than his invention racked to paint my motives. To refute, not to vilify, is the business of him who feels with sincerity, what he can express with energy. Secure in the integrity of his views, the man who really loves his country is safe in the straight path that points to national good ; he deviates into no by-ways of private pique or personal resentment, and if, he debates with an adversary, can do it without reviling him.

Mr. Cartwright does not seem altogether exempt from the foible of that vanity which he attributes to me ; but he wanted one of its best effects when he permitted public questions to degenerate into personal altercation : he has published largely, and does not forget to inform us, that he was one of the first who, in latter times, proposed reform. The inconsiderable unknown individual, the circle of whose fame extends no further than that of his friends, can have

in general but private, personal views.—
 Not so the author who calls on millions to
 assert their rights, and builds his claim to
 notice on a basis, broad as that on which
 a nation rests. If such a one has vanity of
 the right sort, he plumes his wings for a
 nobler flight; he disdains to contract the
 horizon of his views to the narrow span of
 self. To do it would be abhorrent from
 the best principle that can actuate a public
 character,—it is the desertion of a post
 which the voice of honest fame alone can
 give. He who voluntarily makes this des-
 cent, shews that he feels his motives are
 private,—that his public conduct will not
 support him; he sinks from that which
 vanity might tell him is a fair eminence,
 and measures with the multitude, who re-
 ceive impressions but never give them.—
 Let him again take this course; I will
 not follow.

